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Rowland Evans And Robert Novak Flight 007 And the Pope

Disturbing similarities between Soviet conduct in the aftermath of the shooting down of Korean Airlines Flight 007 and the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II are raising new doubts about Moscow's furious denials of complicity in the May 13, 1981, shooting of the pope. In both these cases of sneak attack on innocent targets, the United States was instantaneously fingered by Moscow's propaganda octopus as the guilty party and the Kremlin held blameless.

Moscow's breathtaking audacity in both cases also suggests a possible conclusion: the Soviets today believe they can act with impunity, confident that world fear of Soviet terror or war—and the proximity of Soviet power to Western Europe and Japan, America's chief allies—will limit the American response.

Novosti, the mouthpiece of the KGB, made a major charge of U.S. complicity in the pope's attempted assassination only days after it happened. As documented in a soon-to-be-published book by Paul Henze, a top aide on President Carter's National Security Council staff, Novosti charged that President Reagan's ambassador to the Vatican, William Wilson, had had an argument with the pope on March 13. The Novosti article said that dispute represented "the unmistakable political background against which the episode of the assassination attempt . . . stands out." In his new book, "The Plot to Kill the Pope," Henze notes that Novosti linked the United States to the plot "at a time when no Western

leader or government had even voiced tentative suspicion of Kremlin involvement."

More than two years later, in the aftermath of the attack on Flight 007, the Soviet campaign to link the doomed plane to U.S. espionage started quickly, a profusion of disinformation filling the world's airwaves.

Since May 1981, escalation of the Soviet effort to pin the American flag on the pope's attacker has progressed steadily. It reached a vituperative peak this summer as Soviet leaders came to realize the authoritative stature of author Henze in the American government: many years as a senior counselor in key U.S. embassies, including Turkey (home of the pope's attacker), ending with four years on Jimmy Carter's national security staff. Such a commanding voice documenting new charges of Soviet complicity in the pope's shooting required special treatment. Soviet disinformation experts went to ludicrous lengths to supply it.

Only last month, the well-known Soviet journal Literary Gazette concluded four long articles accusing Henze of direct involvement "in the attack on the life of Pope John Paul II." But why would either the Carter or the Reagan administration want the pope killed—any more than they would risk the lives of 269 passengers in an espionage flight? The Literary Gazette articles provide this answer: with Henze himself in the central role, the White House and CIA planned to "shift the blame" for shooting the pope onto the Soviet Union. The design was to undermine Moscow in Europe, woo European Catholics from the anti-nuclear peace movement and smooth the way for the United States to deploy NATO's new nuclear weapons.

Such a pack of lies is no more fanciful than what some administration officials suspect Moscow has in store for the United States and the world in the days just ahead: recovery of Flight 007's "black box" from the bottom of the sea with "proof" that the aircraft really was on an espionage mission.

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